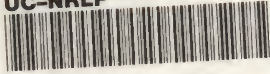

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THE BATTLE OF LAKE GEORGE (SEPT. 8, 1755) AND THE MEN WHO WON IT

By HENRY T. BLAKE

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THE BATTLE OF LAKE GEORGE (SEPT. 8, 1755) AND THE MEN WHO WON IT.

By Henry T. Blake.

[Read December 20, 1909.]

At the southern end of Lake George there stands a monument which was erected in 1903 by the New York Society of Colonial Wars to commemorate one of the most desperate battles and important victories in our colonial history. The monument consists of a massive granite pedestal surmounted by two life-size figures in bronze which represent a colonial military officer in conference with an Indian chief, and the principal inscription on the pedestal reads as follows:

1903

The Society of Colonial Wars erected this monument to commemorate the victory of the Colonial Forces under General William Johnson and their Mohawk allies under Chief Hendrick over the French Regulars commanded by Baron Dieskau with their Canadian and Indian allies.

The impression which this inscription suggests to the ordinary reader is that both Johnson and Hendrick were in command during the battle and that the victory was gained under their leadership. Neither of these inferences is correct. Chief Hendrick had been killed several hours before the battle was fought and several miles distant from its locality. Johnson had been wounded at the very commencement of the action and retired to his tent, leaving his second in command to manage the battle and he alone conducted it to its successful result. These are the undisputed facts of history. Moreover, it is universally agreed that Johnson's gross military neglect in making no preparations for the attack almost caused a defeat,

and that his equally censurable refusal to permit a pursuit of the routed enemy rendered the victory incomplete and valueless. All authorities concur in these points, and they also agree that the real heroes of the day were: *First,* Lieutenant Colonel Whiting of New Haven, Conn., who in the preliminary morning fight after the death of Colonel Williams and Chief Hendrick took command of their panic-stricken followers and not only saved them from destruction but incidentally the rest of Johnson's army also; and, *Second,* Gen. Phineas Lyman of Suffield, Conn., to whom, as already stated, Johnson turned over the command almost at the outset of the battle and who personally directed it for more than five hours thereafter till it ended in victory.

My subject, therefore, possesses a local interest for us, not only as sons of Connecticut but also as citizens of New Haven. Thousands of visitors from our State and hundreds from our near vicinity annually visit the beautiful and historic region where the monument referred to is situated, and others will do so down to the end of time, to most of whom the battle it commemorates is either entirely unknown or is dim and vague as a prehistoric legend. Not only on this, but on *general* grounds it devolves upon this, as on all other Historic Associations, to protest against misleading public records or inscriptions which tend to perpetuate injustice toward heroes of the past, whose names are already almost forgotten. For these reasons I have devoted the paper of this evening to an account of "The Battle of Lake George and the Men who Won it."

The three personages with whom our story will principally deal are Gen. (afterwards Sir) William Johnson, Gen. Phineas Lyman and Lieut. Col. Nathan Whiting; and it will be proper to begin it with some account of the previous history of these three individuals.

Sir William Johnson (to give him prematurely the title by which he is generally known) was born in Ireland and came to this country in 1735 at the age of twenty, to manage the large landed estates of his uncle, Admiral Johnson, in the Mohawk Valley. For this purpose and also for the purpose

of trading on his own account he established himself on the edge of the vast Indian territory which then extended indefinitely toward the north, south, and west of the continent. Being shrewd and ambitious and possessing the genial adaptability of his race to all conditions of life, and to all sorts of men, he neglected no method of ingratiating himself with his savage neighbors and of gaining their respect and confidence. Accordingly he observed strict honesty and firmness in his dealings with them, kept open house for them at all times, and often lived with them in their wigwams, where he wore their garb, greased and painted his face after their fashion, and in whooping, yelling, dancing and devouring roast dog became a recognized champion. By these and other accomplishments he so won their hearts that he was formally adopted into the Mohawk tribe and accompanied them as a member, greased, painted and befeathered, to an important conference with the whites at Albany. Owing to his influence with the Indians he was appointed, in 1750, by the Colonial government of New York, a member of the Governor's Council, which involved a residence for a considerable part of the year in the City of New York.

There he mingled with the best social circles, which doubtless conduced to amenity and polish in his manners; there also he became intimately identified with New York politics, which were as bitter and strenuous then as now, and which did not then any more than now conduce to the purity or magnanimity of a politician's personal character.

In 1755, when war was declared between England and France, a colonial movement was planned to capture Crown Point on Lake Champlain, then in possession of the French. In this expedition the Colonies of New York, Massachusetts and Connecticut agreed to unite, and Johnson was commissioned by each of them a Major General to be in command of their combined forces. This appointment was made, not on account of his military reputation, for up to that time he had had no experience as a soldier; but partly on account of the influence it was likely to have in holding the New York Indians to the English side, and partly to the supposition that no one else

could be put in the general command without exciting local jealousy. For both these reasons the appointment was judicious and attended with good results. Through Johnson's efforts the Mohawks agreed to fight on the English side, and most of them afterwards did so, though others, and all the tribes near Canada, allied themselves with the French.

In connection with this appointment of Johnson as Commander-in-Chief of the Provincial forces for the proposed expedition, the three Colonies also united in appointing Phineas Lyman of Connecticut to be second in command. Like Johnson, Lyman had had no previous military experience except as captain of a militia company in Suffield, and his selection was doubtless due not only to his prominence as a citizen but to a recognition of those abilities and soldierly qualities which were afterwards displayed in a distinguished military career. He was born in Durham, Conn., in 1716. He graduated at Yale College in 1738 and married into a prominent Massachusetts family, his wife being an aunt of Timothy Dwight, who was afterwards President of Yale College. After graduation he became a lawyer and settled in Suffield, which, at that time, through an error in the laying out of the Colony's boundary line, was included in Massachusetts, but was afterwards, through his efforts, conceded to Connecticut where it belonged. He was for several years a member of the Connecticut General Assembly; at first in the lower house and afterwards in the upper branch, and his law practice is said to have been the largest in Connecticut. This practice General Lyman relinquished immediately after his military appointment, and proceeded to Albany, which had been selected as the rendezvous for all the troops and supplies for the proposed expedition.

The third one of the persons with whom we are now principally concerned was Col. Nathan Whiting, who was born in Windham, Conn., but had resided from boyhood in New Haven, being connected with the family of President Clap of Yale College. He graduated from Yale College in 1743, and in 1745 he took part in the expedition to Louisburg, where he

so distinguished himself that he was promoted to a lieutenancy in the British army. After his return he engaged in business in New Haven, but when war broke out in 1755 his martial ardor revived and he accepted a Colonial commission as Lieutenant Colonel with the command of the Second Connecticut Regiment, which was raised for the movement on Crown Point. The regiment, which was made up partly of volunteers and partly of drafted militiamen, was assembled at New Haven, and on May 25, 1755, being about to depart for Crown Point, it marched, with Colonel Whiting at its head, into Rev. Mr. Noyes' meeting house on the Green to hear a discourse by the Rev. Isaac Stiles on "The Character and Duty of Souldiers." Some copies of the sermon still survive and show that the eloquent Divine did full justice to his subject and the occasion. He adjured his hearers to "file off the rust of their firelocks, that exquisitely contrived and tremendous instrument of death," also "to attend to the several beats of that great warlike instrument the drum, and to the language of that shrill high-sounding trumpet, that noble, reviving and animating sound"; he depicted their foes as "lying slain on the battle field with battered arms, bleeding sculls and cloven trunks," "while the good souldiers of Jesus Christ were all the while shining with all the beauty and luster that inward sanctity and outward charms lend to the hero's look." Fired with enthusiasm by these encouraging prospects, the youthful warriors departed for the seat of war and in due time arrived at Albany, where, by the middle of July, about 3,000 provincials were encamped. A large part of the Mohawk tribe had also arrived, warriors, squaws and children, among whom Major General Johnson, with painted face, danced the war dance, howled the war whoop, and with his sword cut off the first slice of the ox that had been roasted for their entertainment.

After various delays, a part of the motley army, under command of General Lyman, moved about twenty-five miles up the Hudson River to "The Great Carrying Place," from which there was a trail to Wood Creek, a feeder of Lake Champlain, on which Crown Point is situated. Here Lyman proceeded to

build a fortified storehouse, which the soldiers called "Fort Lyman," but which Johnson, with a politician's instinct, afterwards called "Fort Edward," as a compliment to the then Duke of York, and this name still clings to the important village which has since grown up at that place.

On the 12th of August, Johnson arrived with the rest of the militia and about 250 Mohawks out of the multitude who had been feasting and dancing at Colonial expense for a month at Albany. These were led by their principal sachem, Hendrick, commonly called King Hendrick, an aged chief of great renown both as warrior and orator, who had been to England twice, and wore a gorgeous uniform which had been presented to him by King George in person.

After consultation, it was decided not to approach Crown Point by way of Wood Creek but through Lake George; and to reach Lake George, fourteen miles distant, it was necessary to cut a road through the forest for the transportation of artillery, boats and stores. This task was accomplished in about a fortnight and on August 28, Johnson with 3,400 men, including Indians, arrived and encamped at the southern end of the lake. Six days later, September 3, Lyman joined him with 1,500 militiamen, 500 having been left to occupy Fort Lyman. Some of the cannon, bateaux and other war material had also reached the lake and the rest was slowly following in wagons along the newly-cut road. Not expecting any enemy, all these equipments and supplies as they arrived at Lake George were deposited along the shore of the lake in preparation for embarking them when everything needed should have come up. No action was taken to fortify the camp, though the erection of a permanent fort (afterwards called Fort William Henry) was begun with a view to establishing a future military post at that point.

Meantime, the enemy in Canada had been neither asleep nor idle. While Johnson's army had been slowly cutting their forest road to Lake George, Baron Dieskau, the commander-in-chief of all the French armies in America, a soldier of great distinction and activity, whose motto was "Audacity Wins," had advanced from Crown Point to Ticonderoga with a force

of 1,500 men consisting of 1,200 Canadians and Indians and 300 French Regulars. On the 2d of September he had left Ticonderoga by way of Lake Champlain and Wood Creek, and was now (September 4th) on the other side of the ridge which separates Lake George from Wood Creek pushing his way southward up that stream, his objective point being Fort Lyman. This post he expected to surprise and carry by assault, thus getting in the rear of Johnson, capturing the greater part of his stores and munitions and cutting him off from all future supplies and reinforcements. This he could easily have done, as Fort Lyman was held by only 500 raw militiamen and his approach was entirely unsuspected by the garrison as well as by Johnson himself. On the evening of September 7, Johnson first learned from a scout that a large body of men had been discovered about four miles above Fort Lyman and marching toward it. He immediately despatched a messenger with a letter warning the garrison of its danger and called a council of war to consider the situation. His own suggestion was to send 500 men the next morning to reinforce Fort Lyman, and 500 more across the country toward Wood Creek in order to seize Dieskau's boats and cut him off from a retreat. Old King Hendrick, however, repelled this proposal with an Indian's mode of argument by taking two sticks and showing that they could be more easily broken when separated than when combined. Relinquishing this plan, therefore, Johnson decided to send 1,200 men the next morning in a single body to Fort Lyman to coöperate with the garrison in its defence. The old chief still demurred, declaring that if they were sent to be killed there would be too many, but if to fight there would be too few. Nevertheless, this plan was adhered to and an order was issued that 1,000 men from the Massachusetts and Connecticut regiments, under command of Col. Ephraim Williams and Lieut. Col. Nathan Whiting, and 200 Indians commanded by Hendrick, should march to the aid of Fort Lyman early next morning.

While these discussions were going on in Johnson's camp, his messenger to Fort Lyman had been killed by Dieskau's scouts and the letter of warning found in his pocket. At

about the same time, two of Johnson's wagoners had been captured on their way to Lake George, and from them it was learned that Fort Lyman was defended by cannon, while Johnson's camp was unprotected even by breastworks, and that his artillery was lying unmounted on the shore of the lake. No sooner were these facts known to the Canadians and Indians than they protested with one voice against Dieskau's plan of assaulting Fort Lyman the next morning and insisted on making the camp at Lake George the object of attack. The ground of this preference was the invincible repugnance of militiamen and Indians to face artillery, and they could neither be cajoled nor reasoned out of such an excusable prejudice. In vain did Dieskau argue, threaten and implore; it was Lake George or nothing, and in the end he consented, with infinite disgust, to march against Johnson's camp in the morning.

Soon after eight o'clock, therefore, on the morning of September 8, two hostile armies were marching towards each other, one south, the other north, along Johnson's road. As the Canadian force was the first to start, we will follow their movement first. Moving from a point near Glens Falls, three or four miles north of Fort Lyman, they had advanced about five miles when they reached a narrow ravine between two steep, wood-covered heights, at the bottom of which ran the road and alongside of it a little trickling brook. The general appearance of the locality is almost unchanged to-day, though a railroad now runs through the bottom of the ravine and a highway and trolley track skirt its western side. At this point the Indian scouts announced that a large force was approaching from the direction of Johnson's camp and Dieskau immediately prepared an ambuscade to receive it. The Indians and Canadians were distributed for half a mile among the woods on the two sides of the ravine and the Regulars were posted across it at the lower end; thus forming a cul-de-sac of savages and militiamen, who then in complete concealment and perfect silence awaited the approach of their unsuspecting enemy. Strict orders had been given not to fire a gun until the English should become completely enveloped in the trap.

The party from the camp had started a little after eight o'clock, the Mohawks being in front, headed by Old Hendrick, who was so heavy and infirm that he chose to ride a horse which had been lent to him by Johnson. Then followed Colonel Williams with the Massachusetts men; and Colonel Whiting with the Connecticut Militia brought up the rear. The whole column, however, was somewhat promiscuously intermingled and proceeded with surprising recklessness in a helter-skelter fashion without the usual precaution of sending scouts at least a mile in advance. Thus proceeding, the head of the column reached the ravine and had advanced some distance into it when Old Hendrick's olfactories recognized a familiar odor and he called out "I smell Indians"! Just then came the crack of a gun from among the bushes and in an instant the air was alive with horrible yells, as if ten thousand devils had broken loose mingled with the din of musketry, which flashed and smoked and rained deadly bullets on the bewildered, staggering and falling provincials. As Dieskau described it later in his official report, "the head of the column was doubled up like a pack of cards." At the first fire Old Hendrick fell dead from his horse, and the Mohawks fled howling to the rear, spreading confusion and panic through the whole body. Colonel Williams sprang to the top of a large boulder to rally his men and was immediately shot through the head. And now the French regulars advanced, pouring murderous volleys into the huddled mass of militiamen, who crowded on each other in frantic efforts to escape the withering fire. To most of the Yankee boys it was their first experience of war, and if they thought of Parson Stiles' sermon, with its allusions to "battered arms, cloven sculls and severed bodies" the application to the case in hand was less promotive of "the hero's look" than a longing for home and mother.

The situation is thus described by Parkman: "There was a panic; some fled outright and the whole column recoiled. The van now became the rear and all the force of the enemy rushed upon it, shouting and screeching. There was a moment of total confusion, but a part of Williams' regiment rallied under

command of Whiting and covered the retreat, fighting behind trees like Indians and firing and falling back by turns, bravely aided by some Indians and by a detachment which Johnson sent to their aid." As this detachment was not sent out until after the firing had been for some time heard at the camp to be approaching, thus giving notice of a defeat, and then had two or three miles to cover before it reached the scene of action, it is evident that Whiting must have had the matter well in hand before it came up. A New York historian says: "After the death of Colonel Williams the command devolved on Lieutenant Colonel Whiting of Connecticut, who, with signal ability, conducted a most successful retreat. On account of the spirited resistance made by Colonel Whiting the enemy were an hour and a half driving the fugitives before them.* Governor Livingston of New York, in a letter written shortly afterwards, says: "The retreat was very judiciously conducted, after the death of Colonel Williams, by Lieutenant Colonel Whiting of Connecticut, an officer who gained much applause at the reduction of Louisburg." Johnson, in his official report, says (without mentioning Whiting's name): "The whole party that escaped came in, in large bodies," (a practical acknowledgment that the retreat had been well conducted,) and he also concedes that the delay which had been effected was of vital importance by giving time to put the camp in a posture of defence. Baron Dieskau, after his capture, expressed his admiration of Whiting's achievement, declaring that a retreat was never better managed; and Vaudreuil, the French Governor General of Canada, in a communication to his own government, admits that Whiting baffled an essential part of Dieskau's plan. This was to drive the routed provincials in confusion back upon an unprotected camp, and to rush in with them, spreading the panic, in which case he felt sure that his disciplined regulars, supporting the wild onslaught of his Canadian and Indian allies, would make victory certain.

That this plan, but for Whiting's leadership, would have been realized and would have succeeded, there can be little

* N. Y. State Hist. Assoc. Proceedings, Vol. 2, p. 18.

doubt. It was not until the firing was heard to be approaching the camp, thus evincing that "the bloody morning scout" (as it was long afterwards called) had been defeated, that any vigorous preparation was made for protection by any kind of barricade. The time was short, indeed, less than an hour and a half, for getting ready, but life and death were at stake, and in those few minutes the men worked in a frenzy. Trees were felled and laid end to end, bateaux, wagons, and other materials brought up from the lake and piled in heaps, and three or four heavy cannon dragged behind the barrier, where they were hurriedly mounted and placed in position. The fugitives were already swarming in. The more orderly bodies followed quickly after, and were rapidly assigned places among those who had been previously disposed at different points for the defence. Then and before the arrangements were fully completed, the savage pursuers came whooping and yelling through the forest, brandishing their weapons and making straight for the slight barricade, already exulting in an assured victory and massacre. They were checked for a moment by a volley of musketry, and immediately after the unexpected roar of artillery and the crashing of cannon balls and grapeshot through the trees around them sent them scattering in consternation through the forest, where behind such shelter as they could get they pushed as near to the barricade as they dared and shot at the defenders as they could get opportunity. And now the French regulars were quickly seen advancing in solid columns down the road, their white uniforms and glittering bayonets showing through the trees in what seemed to be an interminable array. The inexperienced militia behind the barricade grew uneasy, but the officers, sword in hand, threatened to cut down any man who should desert his post.

Dieskau felt sure that if he could hold his forces together for a combined assault he could carry the breastwork; but the Canadians and Indians were scattered through the woods, each man fighting on his own account and could not be collected or controlled. With his regulars, therefore, and such few others as he could gather, he made charge after charge against the

defences, now upon this side and now upon that but only to be repulsed at every point. The fighting spirit had begun to be developed in the defenders and the battle became one of promiscuous musketry for the most part, though the artillery was also vigorously served, now scattering a band of Indians who had collected in an exposed position, and now pouring balls and grapeshot at random through the forest, the crashing of which among the trees effectually encouraged the savages to keep at a respectful distance.

In the very beginning of the fight Johnson had been hit by a musket ball in the fleshy part of his thigh, but was able to walk to his tent, where he remained throughout the day, taking no further part in the action. General Lyman being thus left in command directed practically the entire course of the battle, and in the words of Dr. Holden of the New York Historical Society "conducted what is considered by all experts to be one of the most important Indian fights in history to a successful termination." To quote again from Parkman: "General Lyman took command, and it is a marvel that he escaped alive, for he was for four hours in the heat of the fire, directing and animating his men." "It was the most awful day my eyes ever beheld," wrote Surgeon Williams to his wife; "there seemed to be nothing but thunder and lightning and pillars of smoke."

Governor Livingston in the letter already quoted says: "Numbers of eye witnesses declare that they saw Lyman fighting like a lion in the hottest of the battle—not to mention a gentleman of undoubted veracity to whom General Johnson two days after the action acknowledged that to Lyman was chiefly to be ascribed the honor of the victory." Whether such an admission was correctly attributed to Johnson or not there is but one voice among historians on the subject and that is that Lyman, and Lyman alone, fought the battle as the officer in command, and that to him alone as the directing spirit is due the credit for its result.

Towards five o'clock in the afternoon the fight began to slacken. The Canadians and Indians had lost their interest,

as well as most of their ammunition, and were generally acting on an informal vote to adjourn. The regulars had been half annihilated; their ammunition also was exhausted and further efforts were hopeless. The provincials quickly perceived the situation and jumping over the breastwork with shouts pursued the retreating enemy. Dieskau was found on the ground partly resting against a tree, having been three times shot through the legs and body and left on the field by his own positive order, declaring that that was as good a place to die as anywhere. He was carried to Johnson's tent, where he was courteously received and his wounds attended to by the surgeons. It was with some difficulty that he was prevented from being murdered by the Mohawks, who were enraged at the losses they had suffered in the morning's scout, and especially by the death of Hendrick. As soon as his wounds would permit he was sent to Albany, and thence to New York, and afterwards to England, where he remained on parole to the end of the war. He then returned to France and died there in 1767.

The enemy having been routed it only remained to complete the victory by a vigorous pursuit in force, in order to cut them off from their boats and thus prevent their escape back to Canada. This course was, however, forbidden by Johnson, though urged by Lyman with unusual warmth, and for his refusal he was censured by his contemporaries as well as since by all later critics. But what he disallowed to Lyman was partially accomplished without his knowledge on the same day by a party from the garrison at Fort Lyman. These having heard the firing in the direction of the lake had sallied out to discover the cause of it, and proceeding cautiously through the forest late in the afternoon had come upon some 300 Canadians and Indians, skulkers and fugitives from Dieskau's army, near a small pond by the side of the road and just beyond the scene of the morning's ambush. These they suddenly attacked, though themselves much inferior in number, and defeated them with great loss after a stubborn resistance. The bodies of the slain were afterwards thrown into the pond and it bears the

appellation of "Bloody Pond" to this day. The scattered fugitives from this and the preceding conflicts of the day made their way as best they could to the boats which they had left at Wood Creek and returned through Lake Champlain, a worn-out and half-starved remnant, to Crown Point.

Johnson excused his refusal to permit a pursuit on the ground that he expected another attack, Dieskau having cunningly informed him that there was a large French force in reserve; his object no doubt being to give his routed followers a chance to escape. It seems incredible that Johnson should have given any credence to so flimsy a deception in face of the fact that Dieskau had allowed his troops to be defeated and half exterminated, and himself to be captured, without calling up his pretended reserves, and this excuse must be dismissed as insincere. Johnson also declared that his men were fatigued and disorganized by the events of the day and were not in a condition to pursue; but as he had been confined to his tent throughout the battle he could have known very little on this point in comparison with Lyman, who thought differently.

In view of these considerations and his subsequent conduct all writers agree that Johnson was actuated by jealousy of Lyman who had already been the chief figure of the engagement, and by the idea that if any more glory were achieved that day it would be difficult to monopolize it for himself. As Shakespeare puts it—

> "Who in the wars does more than his captain can
> Becomes his captain's captain; and ambition
> The soldier's virtue, rather makes choice of loss
> Than gain which darkens him."
>
> [Ant. and Cleo., Act III, Sc. 1.]

However this may be it is certain that he promptly determined to secure for himself all the glory of the victory and also all its substantial reward, for his official reports not only omit all mention of Lyman but clearly imply that the whole battle had been fought under his own personal supervision and direction. In them he says not a word about his early retirement from the fight but circumstantially recounts all the details of its progress

in the manner of an eye-witness, commending by name the English officer Captain Eyre, "who," he says, "served the artillery through the whole engagement in a manner very advantageous to his character and those concerned in the management of it." After giving other particulars, he adds: "About four o'clock our men and Indians jumped over the breastwork, pursued the enemy, slaughtered numbers, and took several prisoners, including General Dieskau, who was brought into my tent just as a wound I had received was dressed."

As Johnson's wound had been dressed at least six hours before Dieskau was brought into his tent, it is impossible to acquit him of the deliberate intent to convey a false impression when he thus connects the time of receiving it with the very end of the battle. Nor is this conviction weakened when we read a semi-official despatch written the next day by his military secretary, Wraxall, to Governor Delancey, in which no mention whatever is made of either Lyman or Whiting, and he says in a postscript, "Our general's wound pains him; he begs his salutations; he behaved in all respects worthy his station and is the Idoll of the Army."

A side light is shed on the animus of these despatches by a fact which is mentioned by Governor Livingston and President Dwight. This is that there existed among some of Johnson's officers a cabal against Lyman, which was spreading disparaging reports of his conduct during the battle; reports so obviously false and malicious and so completely refuted by overwhelming testimony that they seem to have fallen flat at the time, and to have been never heard of afterwards.

On September 16, or more than a week after the battle, Johnson made an official report of the events of September 8 to the Colonial governors, in which again Lyman's name and services are completely ignored. In connection with the morning's conflict he mentions Lieutenant Colonel Whiting as "commanding one division of the scouting party," but makes no allusion to his management of the retreat. The following passage, however, is significant: "The enemy," he says, "did not pursue vigorously or our slaughter would have been greater

and perhaps our panic fatal. This gave us time to recover and make dispositions to receive the approaching enemy."

The statement that the pursuit was not vigorous would have been repelled by Dieskau, whose motto was always "Audacity Wins," and who had certainly pursued as vigorously as the resistance led by Whiting would permit; but notwithstanding this misrepresentation to Whiting's disparagement the acknowledgment clearly appears that the checking of the pursuit saved both the camp and the army from destruction. Considering that the report was being made to those Colonial authorities who were especially interested in Lyman and Whiting, the studious neglect to give either of them credit for the slightest service throughout the day bespeaks a spirit in its author which was anything but just, generous or honorable.

The magnitude, as well as the importance of the victory at Lake George was greatly overestimated, not only by the public at large but also by the British Government, both on account of the depression that had been caused by Braddock's defeat only two months previously, and also by the fact that it was the only gleam of success that enlivened the English cause in the Colonies that year. Johnson's reports, therefore, aroused great enthusiasm in England, and he was hailed as a conquering hero worthy of distinguished honors from a grateful country. Accordingly, soon after its receipt in London, he was created a Baronet by the Crown, and Parliament voted him a reward of £5,000. Captain Eyre, the only officer named in the report, was promoted to be Major, and Wraxall, whose only apparent military achievements were to accompany Johnson when he walked to his tent soon after the battle commenced, and to call him "The Idoll of the Army" when it was over, was given a Captain's commission. Lyman and Whiting received nothing except the applause of their own countrymen, who speedily learned the facts and placed the credit for the victory where it belonged. Their example has been followed by all historians. The New York Society of Colonial Wars alone has sanctioned Johnson's injustice by erecting a monument which ascribes to him alone the conduct and success of the battle, and consigns Lyman and Whiting to permanent oblivion.

Johnson took no step forward after the victory, though strongly urged by Lyman to seize and fortify Ticonderoga, then unoccupied, but continued to talk about advancing on Crown Point, and called for reinforcements and additional supplies for that purpose. These were sent him through the months of September and October and into November, but during all that period his army of more than 4,000 men lay inactive except for the work they did in erecting Fort William Henry. Meantime the weather was growing colder and the preliminary storms of winter became more frequent and severe. The soldiers, insufficiently sheltered and clothed, badly fed, and decimated by sickness, were all the time on the verge of mutiny and were deserting in large numbers. Finally, on November 27, it was resolved to break up the camp, and thereupon, a few men being left to garrison the half-finished fort, the rest of the army were dismissed to their homes.

"The expedition," says Parkman, "had been a failure, disguised under an incidental success." Vaudreuil, the Governor of Canada, presents the same view to the French Government in a despatch dated October 3. "M. Dieskau's campaign," he says, "though not so successful as expected, has nevertheless intimidated the English who were advancing in considerable force to attack Fort Frederick (Crown Point) which could not resist them." If this statement was well founded, it supplies a strong comment on Johnson's inactivity after Dieskau's defeat, for it indicates that had his army, flushed with victory, been pushed rapidly forward to Crown Point they might easily have captured the post and ended the English campaign with complete success. The actual outcome of it was that the close of the year found the French established at Ticonderoga in a better and stronger position than they had had at Crown Point, and fifteen miles nearer to the English settlements.

As this paper relates not merely to the Battle of Lake George, but also to the men who won it, it will properly conclude with a brief sketch of the subsequent lives of General Lyman and Colonel Whiting. But before dismissing Sir William Johnson from consideration it is only just to say that his career

after the Battle of Lake George developed nothing which reflects discredit on his military capacity, or his personal honor. During the continuance of the French War his influence with the Indian tribes was invaluable to the Colonies, and his efforts unceasing to maintain friendly relations between the two parties on a basis of justice and humanity. He was engaged in no other important military operations till 1759, when he went with a band of 900 Indians, as the second in command, under General Prideaux, on an expedition against Fort Niagara, and after the accidental death of Prideaux he succeeded to the chief command. In this capacity he conducted the siege of the fort with vigor, skill and courage. He fought a successful battle against a French relieving force, and after the capture of the fort firmly protected the garrison from his savage allies. He also, with his Indians, accompanied Amherst in the following year to Montreal and assisted in the investment and capture of that last stronghold of the French in Canada. This was his last important military service, but his influence with the Indian tribes of New York and Ohio continued to be beneficially exerted till the close of his life, which occurred in 1774. As an important factor in the making of American history he will always occupy a prominent and, on the whole, an honorable place.

As already stated, notwithstanding Johnson's studious concealment of General Lyman's part in the Battle of Lake George, which was successful so far as the British government was concerned, the true story was well known throughout the Colonies, and this was evinced in the following year by the renewal of his commission as Major General, which rank he continued to hold throughout the war. He was also repeatedly entrusted with important commands and took part in various campaigns against the French in Canada. In 1758 he commanded 5,000 Connecticut troops in the disastrous attack by General Abercrombie on Fort Ticonderoga, where he was among the foremost assailants and was with Lord Howe when he fell. Again in 1759, at the head of 4,000 men, he accompanied Lord Amherst in his successful expedition against Ticonderoga and

Crown Point, and in 1760 assisted with 5,000 Connecticut troops in the capture of Montreal. In 1761 he was again in Canada in command of 2,300 Connecticut soldiers, helping to complete the English conquest of that Province. After hostilities had ceased in Canada the seat of war was removed to the West Indies, and an expedition having been fitted out to capture Havana, Lyman was by the joint action of all the Colonies placed in command of the whole Provincial force of 10,000 men which accompanied it. The expedition sailed from New York in November, 1761, and in coöperation with another fleet and army sent out from England, struck the finishing blow of the war, Havana being taken and several French Islands conquered and occupied by the English during the year 1762. This was the last of Lyman's military experiences, as the war was ended by the Treaty of Paris in February, 1763. Throughout his active career in the army he had held the confidence not only of the public but of his brother officers, as a man of superior ability, integrity and wisdom, as well as of military skill, but unhappily, this confidence was the indirect cause of the disappointments and misfortunes which ruined his future life.

After the conclusion of peace, a considerable number of the officers and soldiers who had served in the Colonial armies, formed an association which they called "The Company of Military Adventurers," whose purpose was to secure from the British government a grant of lands in the new western territory which had just been wrested from France largely through their own personal efforts and often (as in Lyman's case) at the sacrifice of their private fortunes. General Lyman was selected by this organization as their agent to proceed to London, and there prosecute the claims and objects of the company.

In pursuance of this appointment, Lyman relinquished the idea of resuming his legal practice and went to England in 1763, where for eleven long years he pursued a weary and discouraging struggle with the officials in power to obtain their consent to the reasonable request which he brought to their notice. As Dr. Dwight remarks, "It would be difficult for

a man of common sense to invent a reason why a tract of land in a remote wilderness, scarcely worth a cent an acre, could be grudged to any body of men who were willing to settle upon it," and especially so when the petitioners were a body of veterans who had gained the victories by which the land was obtained, and whose occupation of it would be important for its future protection. Nevertheless, during all this time Lyman's appeals were met with indifference and treated with neglect. Appointments were made only to be forgotten, and promises, which were never fulfilled. Ashamed to return home without success, he lingered on, hoping against hope and striving against continuous discouragement, until, as Dr. Dwight expresses it, "he experienced to its full extent that imbecility of mind which a crowd of irremediable misfortunes, a state of long-continued anxious suspense, and strong feelings of degradation invariably produce. His mind lost its elasticity and became incapable of anything beyond a seeming effort." And under such conditions the best eleven years of his life were frittered away.

At length, about 1774, the petition in some form or other was granted. Still General Lyman, apparently unable to form new resolutions, failed to return home. His wife, distressed at his long absence, and by the privations which his family suffered in consequence, then sent his second son to England to bring him back. The appeal was successful and Lyman returned in 1774, bringing the grant of land to the petitioners, and for himself the promise of an annuity of £200 sterling. As for the grant of land, many of the beneficiaries were dead and others too old to avail themselves of it. The storm cloud of the Revolution also was now gathering fast and the younger part of his generation had other things to think of than that of settling a western wilderness. For these reasons the land grant proved practically valueless for its intended purpose; and as for his personal annuity, the speedy outbreak of Colonial rebellion, if no other reason, prevented its ever being paid.

The tract of land in question was situated on the Mississippi River, and was part of the territory then known as West

Florida. It included the present site of Natchez, where a French fort had been built and afterwards abandoned. To this malarious and fever-stricken region in 1775, General Lyman, then a broken-down man of fifty-nine, betook himself by a thousand-miles' journey over roadless mountains and bridgeless rivers, accompanied by a few companions, among whom was his eldest son, who was feeble both in body and mind. The son died soon after their arrival and shortly afterward the worn-out father followed him to the grave. "Few persons," says Dr. Dwight, "began life with a fairer promise of prosperity than General Lyman. Few are born and educated to brighter hopes than those cherished by his children. None within the limits of my information have seen those hopes, prematurely declining, set in deeper darkness. For a considerable time no American possessed a higher or more extensive reputation; no American who reads this subsequent history will regard him with envy."

This allusion to the happy prospects of General Lyman's family in early life, suggests that a few words be given to their pathetic fate. The story is related somewhat circumstantially by Dr. Dwight.

General Lyman's second son, who brought his father home from England, accepted, while there, a lieutenant's commission in the British army. In 1775, while in Suffield, he was ordered to join his regiment in Boston, which he did and served on the British side till 1782. It was probably the painful relations with their neighbors which this situation brought to the family in Suffield which caused Mrs. Lyman, in 1776, to remove, with the rest of her children, consisting of three sons and two daughters, to West Florida. Her elder brother accompanied them on the sad and toilsome journey. Within a few months Mrs. Lyman and her brother both died. The children remained in the country till 1782, when the settlement was attacked by the Spaniards. The little colony took refuge in the old fort and resisted the invaders until compelled to surrender on terms; but the terms were at once outrageously violated. In desperation the victims rose upon their con-

querors and drove them from the settlement, but learning soon afterward that a larger force was coming up the river to punish them, and fearing the worst of cruelties, the whole colony fled to the wilderness, aiming to reach Savannah, which was then in possession of the British. On their way they endured innumerable hardships and perils, suffering continually from hunger, thirst, fatigue and sickness. Once they were captured by a hostile band of savages, who were about to torture and scalp them, when they were miraculously rescued by the intervention and address of a friendly negro; but those who survived the terrible journey reached Savannah after wandering a distance of over 1,300 miles, through a period of 150 days. As a result of these experiences the two daughters died at Savannah. The three sons remained there until the war was over and then accompanied the departing British troops. One of them was afterwards in Suffield for a short time but soon disappeared, and what finally became of him and his two brothers, Dr. Dwight, although they were his cousins, was never able to learn.

As to the second son, he continued in the British service till 1782. At that time nearly torpid with grief and disappointment he sold his commission, but collected only a part of the purchase money, and that he speedily lost. He returned to Suffield penniless and almost an imbecile. Friends there endeavored to revive his courage and restore his mental balance, but in spite of all efforts he sank into listlessness and unkempt pauperism and in this condition he died. Truly, the comment of Dr. Dwight was well applied when he called his narrative "The History of an Unhappy Family."

The record of Colonel Whiting will be shorter and more cheerful. As we have seen, he held, during the campaign of 1755, the rank of lieutenant colonel only, but the next year the General Assembly voted him a colonel's commission, with its thanks, for the skill, courage and ability which "he had displayed at the Battle of Lake George and on other occasions." He took part in all the subsequent campaigns of the war, highly commended by both British and Americans as an officer of

uncommon merit, and when peace returned resumed his mercantile business at New Haven. In 1769 he represented New Haven in the Lower House of the General Assembly, and in 1771 was nominated for the Upper House, to which he would undoubtedly have been elected but for his death, which occurred in that year at the early age of 47.

Dr. Dwight described Colonel Whiting as "an exemplary professor of the Christian religion, and for refined and dignified manners and nobleness of mind rarely excelled." And Professor Kingsley in his Centennial Discourse of 1838 speaks of him as one of those citizens for whom New Haven had especial reason to be proud.

He was buried in the ancient burial ground on New Haven Green, but where, no living man can tell. In the Grove Street Cemetery can be found the mutilated fragment of a time-worn slab, leaning against the tombstone of President Clap, in whose family Whiting's boyhood was passed. The name has been broken off, but the inscription which remains records that the deceased died in "New Haven, full of Gospel Hope, April 9th An Dom 1771. Aet 47," and the stone is thus identified as having once marked the resting place of Col. Nathan Whiting.

And thus it happens that Lyman and Whiting, the men who won the Battle of Lake George together, and who suffered the same injustice in connection with that achievement, and who have been alike ignored in the only structure which commemorates the victory they won, are alike sharers in this fate also, that they both rest in unknown graves.